CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A system for providing customer assistance to Internet users, the system comprising:

an online customer support server that connects a group of customer support representatives to user of a web site to provide real time customer support;

an enterprise server that collects presence information from the customer support server regarding current availability of customer support representatives in said group, wherein said presence information is updated at regular, specified intervals;

a web server that provides content to said web site, wherein the content includes said presence information provided by the enterprise server.

2. The system according to claim 1, wherein the customer support server updates the presence information on the enterprise server via Session Initiation Protocol Publish messages.

3. The system according to claim 1, wherein the presence information further includes approximate waiting time for customer support representatives that are not currently available.

4. The system according to claim 1, wherein customer support representatives are designated according to skill set.

5.   The system of claim 4, wherein the web server provides a user selectable option for selecting customer support representatives by skill set.

6.   The system according to claim 5, wherein the system uses cookies for skills based routing, wherein the cookies are used for mining customer information that is required to route calls in a specific way.

7.   The system according to claim 1, wherein, if a customer support representative cannot connect to a user online, the web server provides the user's telephone number to the customer support representative to facilitate telephone support.